



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
SEATTLE DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P.O. BOX 3755
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON 98124-3755

November 22, 2006

CENWS-PM-PL-ER

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
Albeni Falls Dam Shoreline Stabilization Project on Pend Oreille River
Bonner County, Idaho

1. Background. The Albeni Falls Dam Project was authorized under the Flood Control Act of 17 May 1950 (Public Law 516, 81st Congress, 2nd Session) in accordance with Senate Document 9, 81st Congress, 1st Session, as part of a comprehensive plan for the development of the Columbia River System. Funds are allocated each year via Congress for Operation and Maintenance of the Albeni Falls Dam Project. In addition to authority in Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act, specific construction authority for this proposed project is in Section 9 of the Flood Control Act of 1946, 33 USC 701(q).

Operation of the Albeni Falls Dam Project is having an *adverse effect* on archaeological sites determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. These sites are 10-BR-14 Hornby Creek, 10-BR-94 Priest River, and 10-BR-111 Carr Creek. The dam operation is causing shoreline erosion, which results in loss of important archaeological data for understanding the prehistory of the area and the cultural history of several Native American tribes.

Erosion from wave action has caused incremental bank failure along the north shore (right bank) of the Pend Oreille River within the boundaries of the sites. During full pool elevation of the reservoir, soils in this area are subjected to inundation, high winds, and large waves. During winter draw down, the saturated soils have a tendency to slough off or erode onto the shallow areas vacated by the receding shoreline especially when saturated by heavy fall precipitation. Tracks of a local spur of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad (BNSFRR) and Pend Oreille Valley Railroad (POVRR) run along the north edge of the sites. The erosion and bank failure not only are adversely affecting the sites, but have progressed within approximately 500 lineal feet of the railroad, and thus ultimately threaten that line.

2. Proposed Action. The primary focus of the project is the construction of rock riprap bank stabilization along approximately 2000 lineal feet of the shoreline among the three sites combined. When complete, the structures will provide protection against erosion to an elevation of 2067.0 feet (MSL) or 5.5 feet above the regulated summer pool level. Access for the project will occur along temporary haul roads approximately 500 lineal feet to a staging area at Priest River, and 200 feet at Carr Creek. Each haul road will follow the alignment of an existing earthen path and will be decommissioned when work is complete. Access to the Hornby Creek site will occur using existing gravel roads. One temporary railroad crossing will provide access to the Priest River work site during construction. The work will take place within easement areas acquired by the Corps of Engineers (Corps) for

the purpose of bank stabilization on public and railroad-owned lands being impacted by shoreline erosion.

3. Summary of Impacts and Compliance. The attached Environmental Assessment (EA) describes the expected environmental impacts of the proposed action. The placement of riprap will result in temporary disruption of water quality, air quality, and noise. All of these impacts will be temporary and localized. Construction will occur at times when monitoring of bald eagles will be required but at low pool to avoid impacts to fish species. No threatened and/or endangered species use the project site to the extent that they would be adversely impacted by this project. Commercial and sport fishing would not be affected significantly by the project. Cultural resources and Native American concerns would be protected by the project. The Section 404(b)(1) evaluation prepared for the project determined that the project includes appropriate and practicable steps to minimize adverse impacts to the aquatic ecosystem, and that there is no practicable alternative that would have less impact on the aquatic environment. The requirement for a 401 Water Quality Certification is being negotiated with the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. No in-water work will occur during construction at the Carr Creek and Hornby Creek Sites; placement of fill for bank protection at the Priest River site will require a small amount of in-water work involving placement of riprap below the pool level at elevation 2055. The base riprap of approximately two feet will be inundated when the lake is at summer pool level.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, an EA has been prepared. Coordination was accomplished with the local tribes, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, Idaho Department of Fish and Wildlife, Idaho State Historical Preservation Officer, and Idaho Department of Lands. This project fully complies with all applicable environmental laws and regulations including the Endangered Species Act. The Biological Evaluation was prepared and transmitted to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on September 11, 2006, with a determination of “not likely to adversely affect” bald eagles and bull trout, and a determination of “no effect” for gray wolf, lynx, and Ute ladies’ tresses. Concurrence was received on October 11, 2006 from USFWS.

4. Findings. Based on the attached environmental documentation, coordination and analysis conducted by the project sponsor and Corps environmental staff, I have determined that the proposed action will not result in significant adverse environmental impacts. The proposed action is not a major federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, and therefore does not require preparation of an environmental impact statement.

Date

Michael McCormick
Colonel, Corps of Engineers
District Commander